



**DEPARTMENT OF  
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AFFAIRS**

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PRIME MINISTER TO VISIT INDIA

The Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Whitlam, announced today that he would make a short visit to New Delhi from 4 to 7 June.

Mr Whitlam recalled that, at his press conference on 13 March, he had said he hoped to be able to accept an invitation from Mrs Gandhi to visit India this year. He had also said that no Australian Prime Minister had visited India since 1959. It had, therefore, given him considerable pleasure to hear last week from Mrs Gandhi that the dates in June which he had proposed were acceptable to her.

Mr Whitlam said that the visit would be to India only and would involve his being absent from Australia for slightly less than a week in all. He would be accompanied by his wife and by a small party of officials.

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Mr Whitlam went on to say that India, with its population of 548 million people, was known and accepted as the world's largest democracy. It was also a significant industrial and military power with an important part to play in the Asian region and a member of the Commonwealth. It was the predominant power in the Indian sub-continent. For all these reasons it was of considerable and growing importance to Australia.

Mr Whitlam added that in recent years there had been increasing bilateral consultations and contacts.

"Australia has sought to help and co-operate with India in tackling some of its economic problems," he said.

"We have both followed with close interest and attention developments in South-East Asia and the Indian Ocean. Annual consultations are held between our respective Departments of Foreign Affairs."

Mr Whitlam said he looked forward to discussing at first hand the various facets of our relations with India and to exchanging views with Mrs Gandhi on matters of common interest affecting our two countries.

Mr Whitlam said that his visit to India was important also in the context of Australia's relationship with the Asian

region as a whole. He had recently made a successful visit to Indonesia. Later in the year he hoped to visit China and Japan.

The forthcoming visit to India should be seen as part of a pattern of developing first-hand contacts at the head of government level with Australia's Asian neighbours.

Mr Whitlam said he hoped that the visits he would be making this year would be followed up later by visits to other countries in the region.